

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
MARINE CORPS CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS SCHOOL  
WEAPONS TRAINING BATTALION  
TRAINING COMMAND  
2300 LOUIS ROAD (C478)  
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5036

## **STUDENT OUTLINE**

### **STABILITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK**

**CAC-PLAN-216**

**CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS PLANNER COURSE**

**M020AQD**

**SEPTEMBER 2015**

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

a. **TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE**. Given a mission, commander's intent, operations order, scenario, and CMO planning products (e.g., CMO staff estimate, CMO COA graphic and narrative, and a synch matrix, etc.), support stability operations planning to enable the commander's decision making process by identifying instability and stability factors and to design activities to mitigate instability or reinforce stability factors within the operating environment in accordance with MCWP 3-33.1 (CACT-PLAN-2005)

b. **ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

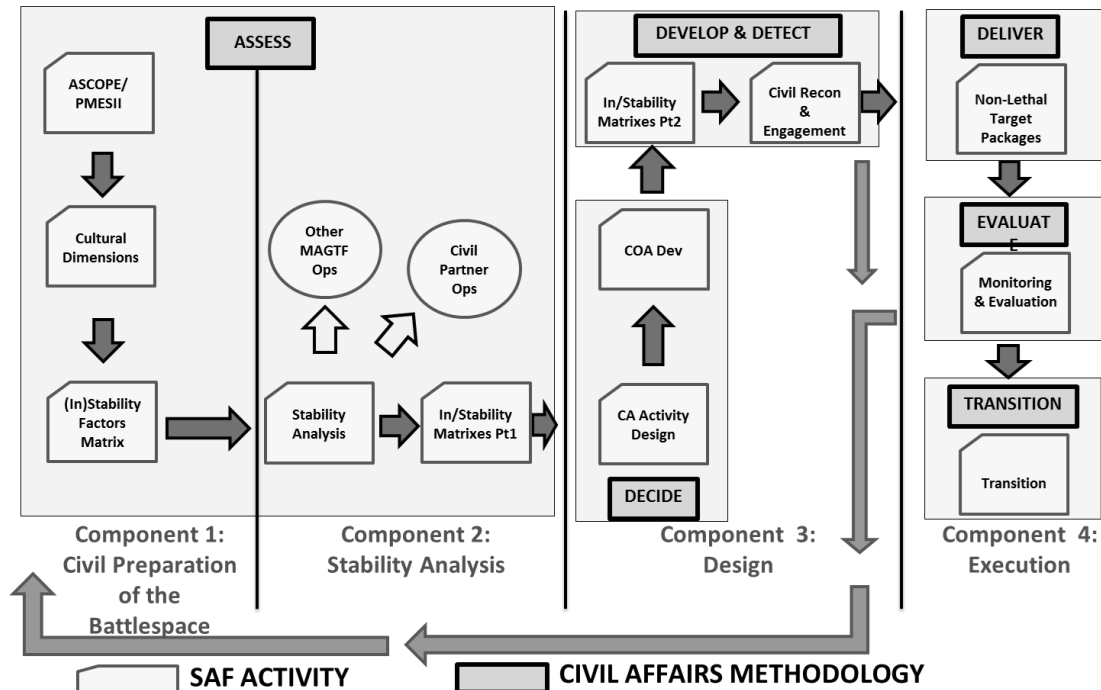
(1) Given a mission, commander's intent, operations order, scenario, and CMO planning products (e.g., CMO staff estimate, CMO COA graphic and narrative, and a synch matrix, etc.), produce an instability matrix in accordance with MCWP 3-33.1 appendix D. (CACT-PLAN-2005i)

(2) Given a mission, commander's intent, operations order, scenario, and CMO planning products (e.g., CMO staff estimate, CMO COA graphic and narrative, and a synch matrix, etc.), produce a tactical stability matrix (non-lethal targeting worksheet) in accordance with MCWP 3-33.1 appendix D. (CACT-PLAN-2005j)

## 1. STABILITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK PROCESS

a. The Stability Assessment Framework (SAF) is an analytical, planning, and programming tool designed to support the Civil Affairs (CA) methodology and non-lethal targeting approaches used during MAGTF operations. SAF helps Marines and civilian practitioners identify sources of instability and stability (SOI/S) and design programs or activities that address SOI/S and measure their effect in fostering stability.

b. SAF is a holistic analytical, programming, and assessment tool that reflects on lessons learned and best practices, but focuses on “understanding” and integrating multiple stability perspectives into planning and assessment. The SAF methodology has four basic components, nested within both the CA methodology and the Marine Corps Planning Process. These components (Civil Preparation of the Battlespace, Analysis, Design and Execution) complement and enhance existing planning and execution processes used during civil affairs operations. To the maximum extent possible, all relevant actors and organizations in the “battlespace” should be encouraged to participate in the SAF process to create comprehensive efforts while conducting stability operations.



Stability Assessment Framework Overview

## 2. **COMPONENT ONE: CIVIL PREPARATION OF THE BATTLESPACE (CPB)**

a. In SAF methodology, CPB is the first component of the process. During CPB, SAF incorporates the following three "variables" to achieve a heightened understanding of the battlespace:

- (1) Understanding of the operating environment
- (2) Understanding of the cultural environment
- (3) Understanding of instability / stability dynamics

b. **CPB Variables Overview.** An understanding of the area of operations requires research on the physical and tangible characteristics of the MAGTF's battlespace. The SAF CPB process examines the following three variables to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the battlespace: First variable, the operating environment is examined in the form of ASCOPE/PMESII [ASCOPE (Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, Events) and PMESII (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure)]. The second variable - cultural environment considerations are applied to relevant factors derived from ASCOPE/PMESII research. The third variable - instability/stability dynamics examine relevant factors distilled from the first two steps, which are analyzed to identify societal grievances and resiliencies. The CPB process is designed to reveal relevant factors that impact stability operations planning and the MAGTF mission within a designated operations area.

c. **Understanding the Operating Environment.** Unlike a typical ASCOPE/PMESII product, SAF does not simply generate a list of facts about the operating environment; it analyzes relevant factors further as it relates to local population perceptions and the MAGTF mission. For example, CA Marines should not simply note there is a local government; they should note it is dominated by a certain tribal group, who undermine government legitimacy and will resist any foreign intervention. Factors would be further refined as more information is attained, MAGTF operations progress and/or planning is completed.

d. **Understanding the Cultural Environment.** Analysis of cultural information considers Marine Corps Operational Culture tenets (i.e., the five dimensions of operational culture - physical environment, economy, social structure, political

structure, belief systems) to determine "normal" conditions and to ascertain the impacts of indigenous culture to MAGTF operations. This analysis is compared against ASCOPE/PMESII to further refine relevant factors to potential sources of instability or stability.

e. **Understanding Instability/Stability Dynamics**. The SAF methodology identifies potential instability and stability factors in the local environment. Factors of instability include grievances of the local population (taken from various local perceptions data sources). On the other side of the equation, factors of stability include resiliencies in the society (institutions and mechanisms that help the society function more peacefully). Of note, events are initially considered neutral until they are influenced by key influences whose actions form grievances or resiliencies.

### 3. **COMPONENT TWO: ANALYSIS**

a. After gaining a more complete understanding of the operating environment through CPB, the second component of SAF methodology analyzes gathered civil information to identify sources of instability/stability and establishes desired objective(s) along with measures of effectiveness that define progress toward addressing each SOI/S. Examining the three CPB variables typically result in producing an extensive list of factors that could be generating instability or creating stability. The primary purpose of analysis is to narrow relevant factors to a lesser number of issues that are indeed actual sources of instability/stability. Analysis also evaluates and prioritizes the most relevant factors to determine possible MAGTF objectives that have the most potential for effectively creating stability. To begin narrowing down the list, SAF employs a tactical form of root cause analysis to examine symptom-cause relationships.

b. Each SOI/S is examined using the SOI or SOS Analysis Matrix and vetted against three (In)Stability criteria to ascertain the potential for establishing effective stability activities. An instability or stability factor resulting in affirmative responses to any criteria is considered a viable issue for designing stability activities. The relative weight of each response must be carefully analyzed for greatest impact to stability in order to prioritize efforts later in activity design. Generally, the more criteria met, the more likely the issue is creating instability or supporting stability. The

three instability and stability criteria questions are explained in greater detail below:

For instability:

(1) Question one: Does this issue decrease support for the government or legitimate governance? Legitimate governance institutions refers to non-governmental entities that help the society regulate itself, such as a village elder or tribal council. These criteria can often be considered in two parts – first whether locals are upset about the issue and if so whether their expectations and displeasure are specifically directed toward the government/local leaders.

(2) Question two: Does this issue increase support for malign actors? This usually occurs when malign actors are either directly addressing the problem (e.g. providing security to a community that the police never visit), or successfully leveraging the issue with their propaganda

(3) Question three: Does this issue disrupt the normal functioning of society? The emphasis is on local norms, which are usually based on what community members have personally experienced in the past. For example, if a community never had electricity, the continued lack of electricity can hardly be undermining the normal functioning of their society.

Potential Sources of Instability	Instability Criteria			SOI?	Prioritization
	Does this issue decrease support for the Govt / legit governance? Explain.	Does this issue increase support for malign actors? Explain.	Does this issue disrupt the normal functioning of society? Explain.	Does the issue meet any Instability criteria?	Is the SOI a Priority Grievance for the local populace?
Government corruption	No, Corruption complaints directed solely at police	No, Malign Actors cannot adequately exploit this issue	No. Locals not concerned; apparently within normal bounds	No	No
Insecurity (Ineffective Police)	Yes, Police ineffectiveness reflect poorly on Govt	Yes, Malign Actors exploit Police ineffectiveness	Yes. Insecurity & police problems exceed local norms	Yes	Yes (#1 Grievance)

**Source of Instability Analysis Matrix Example**

For stability:

(1) Question one: Does this issue increase support for the government or legitimate governance? The population's acceptance and reliance on governmental and/or non-governmental entities to maintain a stable social environment is a key factor. This does not solely equate to providing services, but rather, speaks more to the population's confidence in entities protecting their equities and way of life.

(2) Question two: Does this issue decrease support for malign actors? This usually occurs when malign actors are exploiting the population beyond acceptable levels. Normally, this equates to seizing opportunities for reducing levels of violence, crime, or subjugation.

(3) Question three: Does this issue increase societal and institutional capacity and capabilities? This equates to improving conditions beyond what currently exists without creating artificial systems or process that are unnatural to the environment or local customs.

Potential Sources of Stability	Stability Criteria			SOS	Impact to mission
	Does this increase support for the Govt / legit governance? Explain.	Does this issue decrease support for malign actors? Explain.	Does this issue increase societal and institutional capacity and capabilities? Explain.	Does the issue meet any Stability criteria?	Do we need to support this SOS?
Religious leader	No, practices faith without political motivations	No, neither for or against malign actors	Yes, positive influence on societal stability	No	No
Local Govt arbitrator	Yes, locals accept his decisions	Yes, malign actors want him marginalized	Yes, an arbitrator is an accepted form of local governance	Yes	Yes (#1 Resiliency)

### Source of Stability Analysis Matrix Example

c. The final step on the SOI Analysis Matrix is to prioritize the identified SOIs using local perceptions. Information may be available through surveys, polling data, information sharing with intergovernmental/non-governmental representatives, host nation officials, etc. It is important to note at this stage of SAF, CA Marines may have to make

assumptions as to whether or not a source of instability is a priority grievance for the population and should seek to validate this assumption at the earliest opportunity through civil reconnaissance. **A priority grievance is an issue that a significant percentage of locals - not outside experts - identify as a priority for their community.** Otherwise, locals may perceive the stabilization efforts as focusing on issues that do not really matter to them.

d. Population surveys are important endeavors, which require careful analysis and even more careful planning when operating in remote areas where little or no information exists on local perceptions. In the absence of any formulated survey information, the tactical conflict survey (TCS) method may be used to gather initial local perceptions and to validate the execution of proposed stability activities. The TCS is designed to facilitate discussions with locals and to identify local causes of (In)Stability during initial civil engagement. The four questions are:

(1) Has the population in your village changed in the last year?

(2) What is the most important problem facing the village?

(3) Who do you believe can solve your problems?

(4) What should be done first to help the village?

e. All questions should be followed by asking: "why" for as many iterations until a clear sight picture of local (In)Stability dynamics can be determined. This data is compiled and processed for making subsequent targeting decisions, but is also maintained in a civil information management (CIM) data base as baseline information needed for subsequent analysis on performance and effectiveness. Application of the TCS method should be practiced so that questions are asked in a similar fashion during each engagement, but are woven in normal conversation that is transparent to the audience. Simply stated, the employment of TCS requires significant prior planning and training. It is very important to note that the SOI/S Analysis Matrix frames the potential sources of (in)stability such that affirmative or negative responses should make sense as they relate to evaluating grievances i.e. sources of instability or resiliencies, i.e. sources of stability.



During the Design process, activities are developed to mitigate or protect SOI/S.

f. CMO planners should recognize that not every SOI/S can be mitigated or protected through MAGTF organic capabilities or through nonlethal means. Certain SOI/S may be better mitigated or protected through other approaches which could include referral to intergovernmental/non-governmental-sponsored programs, Host Nation actions or in some cases, referred for prosecution by other MAGTF or Joint targeting approaches. When these types of issues arise, then CMO planners need to share the results of SOI/S analysis with other MAGTF entities and be prepared to collaborate in other stability activities that are not related to SAF methodology, but are important to achieving overall MAGTF objectives.

g. The next steps in stability analysis are: conducting root cause analysis, establishing an objective, and identifying Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) and MOE data sources in order to complete the (In)Stability Matrix part 1.

h. Root cause analysis seeks to identify and correct root causes, as opposed to simply addressing their symptoms. The "5 Whys" technique is used to conduct root cause analysis because it does not require data segmentation, hypothesis testing, regression or other advanced statistical tools, and in many cases can be completed without a data collection plan. By repeatedly asking the question "Why" (five is a good rule of thumb), you peel away the layers of symptoms, which can lead to the root cause of a problem. Very often the apparent reason for a problem will lead you to asking another question. Although this technique is called "5 Whys," you may find that you will need to ask the question fewer or more times than five before you find the issue related to a problem.

i. The establishment of objectives uses the same processes and principles used in the Marine Corps Planning Process; therefore, no further elaboration will be provided other than to remind CMO planners the importance of collaborating with other MAGTF entities while developing courses of action and employing SAF methodology.

j. The establishment of MOEs measure signs of progress toward achieving the stated objective. MOEs measure impact and change to the environment and do not simply measure output or task accomplishment. Careful analysis must be placed on deriving MOEs since it truly underpins achievement of objectives in a

manner directly related to addressing root causes of instability or stability. MOE data sources are identified after MOEs indicators are established. These MOE data sources must provide accurate information to monitor MOE indicators based on simplicity, practicality, and affordability to maintain an enduring and consistent monitoring and evaluation process throughout operations. Figure D-7 provides a template for what will be refined further during the design phase.

k. The final step in stability analysis is to complete the (In)Stability Matrix part 1 analysis section by inserting an SOI/S and then determining objectives with viable effectiveness indicators and legitimate means to measure progress. The establishment of objectives uses the same processes and principles as in the Marine Corps Planning Process; therefore, no further elaboration will be provided other than to remind CMO planners the importance of collaborating with other MAGTF entities while developing courses of action and employing SAF methodology.

Analysis						Design		
Source of (In)Stability	Cause (Perception)	Cause (Systemic)	Objective	MOE Indicators	MOE Data Sources	Activity	MOP Indicators	MOP Data Sources
Taken from SOI / SOS analysis	Population's perception	Root cause	Objective statement	Indicators reflecting measurable change as objective is achieved	Information sources allowing you to track indicators			

(In)Stability Matrix part 1 Template

#### 4. **COMPONENT THREE: DESIGN**

a. In the next step of SAF, CA Marines design, prioritize, and synchronize stabilization activities using the Activity Design Worksheet and complete the design section of the (In)Stability Matrix part 2. This process begins by

brainstorming potential activities specifically related to issues captured during previous SOI/S analysis. Potential activities are then screened and refined using three Stability Criteria. The activity design worksheet facilitates designing stability activities predicated on previous SOI/S analysis. The SOI/S is captured in the header of the first column to ensure traceability. The proposed activity is entered into the first column. Subsequent rows, associated with each possible activity, are developed across the template addressing items identified in column headers. Explanation for the stability criteria questions remains the same. However, at this juncture, opportunity exists to reexamine data while fully explaining responses to stability criteria and exploring relative importance for prioritization. Proposed activities that meet two of three Stability Criteria are then refined using the following eight Design Principles:

- (1) Can be sustained by the local government or society.
- (2) Maximizes local involvement to create local ownership.
- (3) Minimizes the trade-offs between short-term positive effects and any potentially negative long-term impacts (i.e. unintended consequences).
- (4) Leverages or supports the programs of other government agencies, inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, and the HN government.
- (5) Is appropriate to the local political and cultural context.
- (6) Strengthens governmental accountability and transparency.
- (7) Leverages and builds upon existing societal resiliencies.
- (8) Includes the flexibility to adapt if circumstances change.

Identify Possible Activities  (Insert SOI /SOS Objective here)	Stability Criteria			Design Principles								Resources		Select	
	Does the activity increase support for government / governance? Explain.	Does the activity decrease support for malign actors? Explain.	Does the activity increase institutional and societal capacity and capability? Explain.	Sustainability	Local Ownership	Short-Term vs. Long-Term Results	Leverage Support from other Org.	Culturally & Politically Appropriate	Accountability & Transparency	Leverage Existing Resiliencies	Flexibility	Money	Personnel	Expertise	Time
ID potential activities that contribute to achieving SOI / SOS objective. Input each activity separately in this column and proceed across each row to ascertain viability.	Explain how the activity will increase support for the government and/or legitimate governance institutions.	Explain how the activity will decrease support for malign actors.	Explain how the activity will increase institutional and societal capacity and capability.	Refine the proposed activity to make it meet as many Design Principles as possible.								Determine resource requirements.		Based on the stability criteria, design principles & resource availability, should the activity be implemented.	

## Activity Design Worksheet Template

b. It is important to note that activity design does not have to meet all design principles, but the probability of executing a successful activity increases significantly when all design principles are met.

c. The next step is to screen each proposed activity against available resources (money, personnel, expertise, time) to validate whether the activity is realistic or even meets the parameters of the MAGTF's mission. If the activity is deemed appropriate and feasible, then Measures of Performance (MOP) are determined. MOPs are quantitative measurements that only track output in the form of task accomplishment e.g. if the security task is to conduct patrols, then the MOP is simply the number of patrols performed. The number of patrols conducted does not necessarily equate to improving the security environment but it may be an important criterion to evaluating overall stability. MOP data sources are identified after MOP indicators are established. These MOP data sources provide accurate information to monitor MOP indicators based on specific tasks that are monitored and evaluated throughout operations. If the activity meets acceptable parameters for final consideration, then the (In)Stability Matrix design section is

completed and processed for final validation as a legitimate non-lethal stability targeting package.

d. The final step in design is to validate the activity identified in the (In)Stability Matrix part 2 as a viable stability non-lethal target. This validation occurs through civil reconnaissance and civil engagement. Civil reconnaissance and civil engagement examines actual local conditions to ensure planning assumptions were not corrupt or misguided. At this juncture, it is critical to implement stability non-lethal targeting efforts predicated on a thorough understanding of local conditions, local grievances, and local norms... not outsider assumptions. This understanding can be gained through civil reconnaissance or other mechanisms including population surveys, focus groups, key leader engagements, input from local NGOs, etc.

Analysis						Design		
Source of (In)Stability	Cause (Perception)	Cause (Systemic)	Objective	MOE Indicators	MOE Data Sources	Activity	MOP Indicators	MOP Data Sources
Taken from SOI / SOS analysis	Population's perception	Root cause	Objective statement	Indicators reflecting measurable change as objective is achieved	Information sources allowing you to track MOE indicators	Activity to achieve objective	Indicators that measure progress toward activity completion	Information sources that track activity completion

### (In)Stability Matrix part 2 Template

e. During this final step and prior to the execution phase, activities are validated, prioritized, and synchronized with overall MAGTF efforts. If an activity is not validated through civil reconnaissance, i.e. planning assumptions refuted or from any other invalidation, then the activity is deemed untenable and must be reevaluated though CPB and the entire process again. If an activity is validated, the (In)Stability) Matrix part 2 is

forwarded through the operations department as a non-lethal targeting package and initial transition criteria are established until they are further refined during monitoring and evaluation efforts in the next phase.

## 5. **COMPONENT FOUR: EXECUTION**

a. The execution phase consists of: delivering the non lethal targeting package (i.e. completed (In)Stability Matrix) to the operations department and gaining concurrence, conducting monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on approved non-lethal targeting packages, and conducting transition to competent authorities (event driven transition) or conducting closing actions at the conclusion of operations (time driven transition).

b. The first step of this phase is simply finalizing the non-lethal target package so that it becomes part of the MAGTF operational effort. The second step is most significant because it establishes an iterative cycle of examination that eventually leads to the accomplishment of objectives or the termination of activities because they fail to achieve desired effects. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is basically conducted on the following three levels: performance, effect, and overall stability.

(1) Measures of Performance (MOPs) simply track the accomplishment of an activity. They answer the question, "Is the activity being performed and making progress?" and in the long run "Is the activity complete?" Examples might include the number of miles of road paved, or number of police trained. MOPs are monitored during the implementation of an activity until it is completed.

(2) Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) measure an activity's impact. Examples might be: decreased travel time (for a road project) or decreased criminal activity (for a police training activity). They are generally evaluated after an activity has progressed to a point of having some impact on the operating environment. A key point is to monitor for unintended positive effects that can be reinforced or unintended negative effects that must be mitigated immediately.

(3) Overall stability is the third level of assessment. Rather than measuring the effect of individual activities, it takes into account the effect of ALL the activities conducted over a longer period of time, as well as the influence of external factors. It asks, "Is stability increasing or

decreasing?" Key to measuring overall stability is identifying good indicators, creating a baseline, and then tracking the indicators at regular intervals, starting as early as possible. The best overall stability indicators reflect local perceptions of stability, NOT perceptions or assumptions held by outsiders. They are based on the question, "What will local people do or say differently if they believe the environment is getting more stable?" Examples include:

(a) District Government Recognition - e.g., locals take their problems to the district government for resolution - reflects trust and confidence.

(b) Local-on-local violence - a direct measure of insecurity.

(c) Population freedom of movement - reflects security conditions.

c. A single indicator is incapable of measuring overall stability. Stability indicators normally aggregate to build a complete sight picture. Therefore, stability planners must establish and track metrics methodically to inform progress and to maintain an iterative process of stability activity refinement.

d. The final step of the entire SAF process is to transition operations and to redeploy MAGTF assets to other contingencies or back to CONUS for retrofit and reassignment. As alluded to earlier, initial transition criteria are established when activities are submitted for implementation; however, more definitive transition criteria will be established as operations progress and the M&E process determines most realistic circumstances based on progress and overall MAGTF transition criteria.

**REFERENCE:**

MCWP 3-33.1 MAGTF Civil-Military Operations

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